**Component #1: Needs, Goals, Objectives**

**Title of your Group Program:** Test taking tips

**Rationale:** Test taking is a very common activity performed by students through their entire educational career. Its importance has grown to such degree that at many times they determine whether or not a student can enter a specific program or class. The pressure of obtaining good scores on tests can cause anxiety and other problems that refrain students to perform to the best of their ability, misrepresenting their level of knowledge and understanding of the material being tested (Damer & Melendres, 2011). For this reason it is important to prepare students for test taking, by teaching them skills and strategies that will help them perform better. Through the teaching of test taking tips/strategies students will be able to undertake any test taking situation appropriately by knowing what to do before, during, and after the test (Dodeen, 2008). According t o Dodeen (2008), a number of investigations have shown that those who have participated in seminars related to test taking strategies have shown lower anxiety levels and higher test scores than those peers who didn’t participate in such programs. This being said, it is imperative that students begin acquiring and understanding these skills early on, this paving the road to test taking success.

**Data sources:** In order to assess student’s needs in this particular area a number of data sources will need to be acquired. The first data acquired would be standardized and general testing reports. They will provide information regarding the type of questions students had most difficulties with. This will determine if there is a need to focus on specific types of questions such as problem solving, fill in the blank, comprehension, multiple choice, or essay. Another data that should be looked at is school demographics and which particular group of students seems to be doing poorly on tests. This can correlate with standardized testing data which can demonstrate which groups of students demonstrated deficiencies and in which areas. This particular information can be attained by desegregating the standardized data reports. One last assessment to include as a way of obtaining data and determine student needs would be interviewing teachers of the particular groups or grade levels that seem to be showing gaps in the area. This can be accomplished through the use of a questionnaire that includes which test areas seem to be most difficult to students, which strategies would be most beneficial to cover in group, and which students she feels would benefit most from participating in group.

Data is essential when developing counseling programs in the school in order to justify with sustainable evidence all the different decisions, activities, and element that will make up the program. Through data counselors and other program members obtain the necessary information that creates changes in the counseling program and the school. Through assessment, evaluation, and data acquisition counselors can identify the needs of the population as well as expose access and equity issues, and narrow down the areas in which the program should focus. Gathering and examining different types of data provides counselors with a better understanding of students’ needs and barriers to achievement (Erford, 2011). With this information program goals can be created to attend the needs of the school population. Evaluation and data is also relevant to progress and program effectiveness. Through data counselors can view if the delivery systems implemented are being of benefit to the students and progress is being made Evaluation of the counseling program also provides data which enables the counselor and advisors to determine if the program goals are being attained and what changes need to be made in order to provide students the necessary services to be successful; therefore closing the achievement gaps. This will allow the counselor to gear the program towards accomplishing the mission, goals, and standards established by the ASCA National Model (2005) and the school.

**Population:** The group is for students in the 4th grade who have been referred by the teacher and have presented difficulties in test taking. Number of students: 6

**Recruitment and Screening:** The counselor will consult with teachers for the recruitment process. Students will be recruited based on teacher referral. Teachers will choose students who have presented difficulties when taking test and/ or in specific test taking skills or areas.

**Group Structure:** This psychoeducational group is a five session closed group that will meet for five weeks. Since is targeted to elementary school, sessions will run for an estimate of 45 minutes. The time the sessions will be held will vary from week to week in order to avoid affecting class work and attendance for one particular class. Group will be held in counseling group room and will be offered once every semester.

**Small Group program goal:** Through the participation of the small group students will identify and develop test taking strategies to improve test performance.

**Session #1 objectives:** Counseling content objective: Through participation in the group, students will identify effective test taking strategies 7 out of 10 times.

Academic content objective: Given a bar graph, students will analyze data to answer questions correctly at least 70% of the time.

**Session #2 objectives:** Counseling content: Through participation in the group, students will identify effective strategies and techniques to reduce test anxiety and enhance test performance 7 out of 10 times.

Academic content: Through a number of activities, students will identify the all of the important elements of writing a letter.

**Component #2: Research-Supported and Standards-Based Content**

**Title of Session #1:** Test prep

**Brief Summary of Session:** Through various activities and content related to test taking tips students will discuss and reflect upon different course of actions that can be taken to improve test performance.

**Theoretical Orientation:** Reality theory. Through this theory school counselors can help students understand that they have the potential to change, grow, and achieve through the use of self evaluation and planning (Glichrist-Banks, 2009).

**Specific Group Technique:** According to Schellenberg (2012), reality theory relies on using student’s strengths to empower and promote change. With the surveying and bar graph activity students will be able to identify their strengths in the test taking strategies area in order to integrate to their daily lives those strategies in which are not part of their strengths.

**Duration:** 45 *Minutes*

**Materials/ Media:** Poster boards, markers, board

**Core ASCA Standard(s):** A: A1.5- Identify attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning.

C: A2.9- Utilize time and task management skills.

PS: B1.3- Identify alternative solutions to a problem.

**Core State Academic Standard(s):** Puerto Rico: E.RE. 4.12.3- Interprets data graphs to answer questions about a situation.

**Objectives:**

Counseling content objective: Through participation in the group, students will identify effective test taking strategies.

Academic content objective: Given a bar graph, students will analyze data to answer questions.

**Assessments**:

* Poster Project
* Bar graph completion

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**  Students will be introduced to counselor, group guidelines, expectations, goals, and confidentiality. They will discuss thoughts and actions they encounter when preparing and/or taking a test. Counselor will have a particular set of actions and will survey students to see which particular steps students are currently taking. This data will be used later for an activity. Counselor will present different strategies that can be used before, during, and even after the test. Once that has been discussed, the data acquired at the beginning of the session will be looked at. Counselor and students will create a bar graph that will detail the different strategies and the number of students that perform each one. They will discuss which particular strategies they should apply more to their test preparation routine (identify strengths and weaknesses). Once that is completed students will create a poster with different strategies that they feel they need to be reinforced or reminded of, to keep in their home or locker.

**Title of Session #2:** Test anxiety out

**Brief Summary of Session:** Through various activities and content related to strategies to reduce test anxiety students will discuss and reflect upon their personal thoughts, feelings, and actions whey taking a test and how can they be changed positively in order to reduce anxiety improve test performance.

**Theoretical Orientation:** Cognitive- behavioral theory.According to Damer & Melendres (2011), most effective interventions for students who are experiencing difficulties in test performance/ anxiety are those that combine skills, such as test taking skills and study skills, with cognitive or behavioral approaches, such as cognitive restructuring.

**Specific Group Technique:** Cognitive restructuring and Stress inoculation. According to Schellenberg (2012), this technique is helpful in that it promotes self – control and that allows the student to identify faulty thinking that leads to self-defeating behaviors. The stress inoculation technique teaches cognitive and physical strategies that allow students to manage thoughts; therefore reducing stress and anxiety (Schellenberg, 2012).

**Duration:** 45 minutes

**Materials/ Media:** paper, pencil

**Core ASCA Standard(s):** A: A.1.1- Articulate feelings of competence and confidence as learners.

A: A1.5- Identify attitudes and behaviors that lead to successful learning.

C: A2.7- Develop a positive attitude toward work and learning.

PS: A1.8- Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it.

PS: C 1.10- Learn techniques for managing stress and conflict.

**Core State Academic Standard(s):** Puerto Rico: CE.4.12- Writes sentences and paragraphs clearly and following correct grammar.

CE.4.13- Utilizes the appropriate elements (date, greeting, body, signature) to write letters.

**Objectives:**

Counseling content: Through participation in the group, students will identify effective strategies and techniques to reduce test anxiety and enhance test performance.

Academic content: Through a number of activities, students will identify the important elements of writing a letter.

**Assessments**:

* Project- letter writing

**Procedures/ Instructional Strategy:**

The session will begin by going over how everyone’s week has been. Counselor will review the group guidelines and some of the strategies discussed in the previous session. Then through the direction of the group leader students will discuss the thought and feelings they have when they are going to take a test and ways to transform any negative thought or behavior that comes up during that time. The counselor will present a number to strategies to reduce anxiety and promote positive thinking. Then students will be directed to write themselves a letter where they highlight positive thoughts, characteristics, and strategies to reduce anxiety. This will lead the discussion to review of the important aspects of a letter (date, body, signature, greeting, etc.) as well as punctuation.

4) Student discusses the importance of supporting theoretical orientations and techniques in school counseling prevention and intervention programs.

Theoretical orientations and techniques are essential parts of any school counseling program. They are the backbone of how the program will achieve the goal that was put in place. Both theoretical orientations and techniques must be supported by research. Like any other aspect of the school counseling program they must be validated and accounted for through hard evidence. Through the support of research the counselor can demonstrate that what is intended and the techniques behind it are in fact effective means to achieve the overarching goal of the group. This helps validate the work being done and provides a view of what outcomes can be expected at the end of the program.

**Component #3: Ethical, Legal, Multicultural** *(title of third section - Livetext template)*

Taking under consideration legal, ethical, and multicultural issues in group counseling is essential when developing and implementing group counseling. Laws and ethical codes provide the counselor with guidelines of how he should behave and actions to follow if issues should arise in group (Erford, 2011). They provide a map of what procedures need to be followed before, during, and after group to avoid hurting students as well as legal repercussions. Multicultural issues are also essential in that they allow counselors to determine which students will actually benefit from group, therefore affecting member selection process and techniques utilized. For instance, if a group is created for Latino students who have recently arrived to the U.S, allowing a member of African American background or U.S. born Latino would not be beneficial. For one, students are not experiencing the same situations and the techniques utilized are targeted to be effective to that particular group and will not necessarily be of benefit to members of other cultural groups.

Ethical and legal considerations in group work in the school are mostly related to confidentiality, informed consent, and the possibility of pre-existing relationships among group members. For this reason it is essential that school counselors discuss these issues prior to beginning group sessions. Confidentiality is essential to counseling in that it creates an atmosphere of trust (Erford, 2010). Although this is so, when working in groups and with minors this can be an issue. In essence confidentiality belongs to the client; in this case the student, but legally the parents hold the right to confidentiality. Balancing both areas can be of difficulty; therefore it is essential that counselors help parents understand the importance of maintaining a certain degree of confidentiality with the student. Another issue regarding confidentiality is that it is limited and that in group work this cannot be guaranteed (Erford, 2010). The counselor must encourage group members to maintain confidentiality, but also discuss not being able to guarantee it because of the nature of the counseling technique and inability to control what members say outside group. It is also necessary to discuss with students that confidentiality is limited in case of intended harm to self and others and in case of court subpoena, as well as their parents’ right to confidentiality. According to White Kress, V. E., Costin, A., & Drouhard, N. (2006), the counselor is responsible to consider when it is appropriate or safe to disclose confidential information about the student. Therefore when working with confidentiality issues and weather to breach this confidentiality, it is important to always inform the parents as well as the student the limits of confidentiality as well as the benefits or maintaining certain degree of confidentiality can have for the student.

Just as confidentiality is an issue in group work member relationships can be an issue. When working in a school setting it is very common for group members to know one another and have relationships outside of group. Since this is almost inevitable, it is important that the counselor decide if he will or will not allow this in group and if he does how he will work with the issue in group in a way that maximizes student participation. Lastly, another legal/ethical issue would be informed consent. In case of groups in school, this must be acquired from the parent. The document should explain the basics of the group so that the parent is aware of what his child will be engaged in. the informed consent document must be made in accordance to the policies and procedures established by the school system.

Based on the nature of the group and the topic being discussed it can be concluded that some of the issues that can arise for this particular group are previous relationships among members and informed consent. It is likely that students who are in need of information and skills regarding test taking tips will have similar courses or have a relationship outside of group. The issue of informed consent is relevant since it is required to inform parents of what their students will be involved in. Since “test taking tips” is a more academically related topic, the issue of confidentiality should not be a major issue, yet it will still be encouraged by the group leader.

This program is culturally sensitive in that its goals and activities were designed based on the members of the group, taking under consideration differences in language, culture, religion, beliefs, and abilities. It is also sensitive to this issue in that the counselor will respectful and aware of the different beliefs, values, and needs of the population. The counselors will be in constant education and training in order to stay up to date with changes in the makeup of the student population and provide the best service possible. Issues of conflict, prejudice, and/or discrimination will be handled by acknowledging the difference among members and their feelings, as well as discussing these situations with other group members. These issues will also be resolved through promoting and modeling tolerance and respect for each member’s background and beliefs. By discussing and processing situations and feelings of conflict, and by modeling respect the group leader promotes a safe environment for learning.

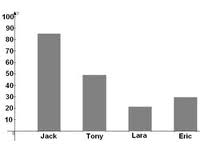
**Component #4: Program Evaluation**

**Pre-Post measure Session #1**

**Which is of the following is an effective test taking strategy before taking a test:**

1. **Read the instructions**
2. **Ask for help**
3. **Eat a good breakfast**
4. **Be late**

**The bar graph given below shows the Math scores of grade 4 classmates. Who is in the second highest position?**



1. **Jack**
2. **Tony**
3. **Lara**
4. **Erick**

**Pre-Post measure Session #2**

A good relaxation technique for lowering test anxiety is:

1. Panic
2. Taking deep breaths
3. Thinking about getting an A
4. Concentrating on others

Which one is **not** an important element of writing a letter:

1. Punctuation
2. Body
3. Greeting
4. envelope

Strategies related to accountability are essential in monitoring student achievement and program appraisal (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012). Accountability in a comprehensive school counseling program has the purpose of proving, with substantial evidence, changes in students as result of participation in the program. Through evaluation counselors obtain the necessary evidence to determine if the program is being effective. The evidence will show deficiencies and strength of the efforts being made. Evaluation is closely tied to outcome driven programming. Outcome driven programming’s main objective is to determine how students, or in this case group members, are different as a result of participating in the program. Based on the results of different evaluations and their analysis, conclusions regarding the program’s strengths, weaknesses, and value are made (Erford, 2011). These conclusions are used to set new goals and strategies to improve the program and that will lead the program in a new direction for the benefit of the student population.

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